Reagan wants $38 million for contras

President Reagan was busy selling his contra aid package to lawmakers yesterday. Reagan apparently wants most of the money to go toward non-lethal supplies such as food and clothing. House Republican leader Robert Michel says the Reagan plan calls for $36 million in aid. Michel says Reagan wants three-point-six million of that set aside for arms and ammunition. The plan reportedly calls for the release of the arms money only if attempts at a cease-fire fail.

Approval of the contra package could open the doors for a US peace mission to Central America. A US official says if Congress OK's the money, Secretary of State George Shultz will make a trip to Central America for talks with Sandinista officials. The two countries haven't held substantive discussions since 1984.

Report questions computer trading

A Congressional report says the inability of the stock market's computer trading equipment to deal with huge volumes of trades must be addressed to help prevent the kind of market crash that occurred last October. The study recommends that lawmakers, federal regulators and trading officials deal with the effects that the performance of the nation's various stock exchanges must have on each other. US Comptroller General Charles Bowsher urged that steps must be taken to make sure individual investors are treated as fairly as large institutions.

NASA finds more shuttle problems

NASA engineers have found another problem with a shuttle booster engine — which they say is due to faulty workmanship by the manufacturer. Officials say they spotted some bad welds on a critical seal in the shuttle main engine. NASA officials say they don't know if this latest problem means another delay in the resumption of shuttle flights — which they had hoped to resume by late summer.

TV sex on the rise

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America has released a study it says shows network television characters have increasingly replaced sexual innuendo with sexual activity. And the group says much of that activity is casual, fails to show its consequences, and is a bad example for teen-agers.

New Hampshire cracks down on dropouts

A dropout-prevention program that is a priority for Republican Governor John Sununu easily passed the New Hampshire Senate yesterday afternoon. The bill would bar high-school-age youths from obtaining a driver's license without first passing a competency exam. It also would prohibit 16- and 17-year-olds from dropping out of school without demonstrating basic skills in reading, writing, and math. The Senate passed the bill by voice vote, though two Republicans said beforehand that they were voting for it despite having reservations about it.

Senators Mark Mounell of Hins and Susan McLane of Concord said coining students to stay in school is not the best way to get them interested in learning.

Modern art museum planned in old electronics factory

The Massachusetts House gave a rousing second reading of approval today to a $53 million plan to convert an abandoned factory in North Adams into one of the largest modern art museums in the world. The bill submitted by Governor Michael Dukakis cleared its second legislative hurdle by a roll-call vote of 104-to-39. But Republican representative Jane McKenna of Holden called for reconsideration, a parliamentary device that prevents the bill from advancing immediately to the Senate. The next House vote would come Thursday or next Monday. The rollcall came after several hours of debate in which legislators from Northwestern Massachusetts defended the project against critics who questioned the wisdom and the politics behind it.

Dukakis submitted the North Adams bill earlier this month after the 1987 session of the legislature rejected a note-sweeping bill that would have provided $130 million dollars to fund Manhattan and dozens of other projects statewide as well as language providing an annual operating subsidy on the renovated Hynes Convention Center in Boston.

Responding to reports that the Massachusetts deal would fall apart without prompt action, Dukakis also refined a separate bill for the other projects and a third bill for the Hynes bail-out.

Compiled by Michael Z. Geiger